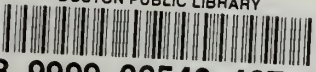
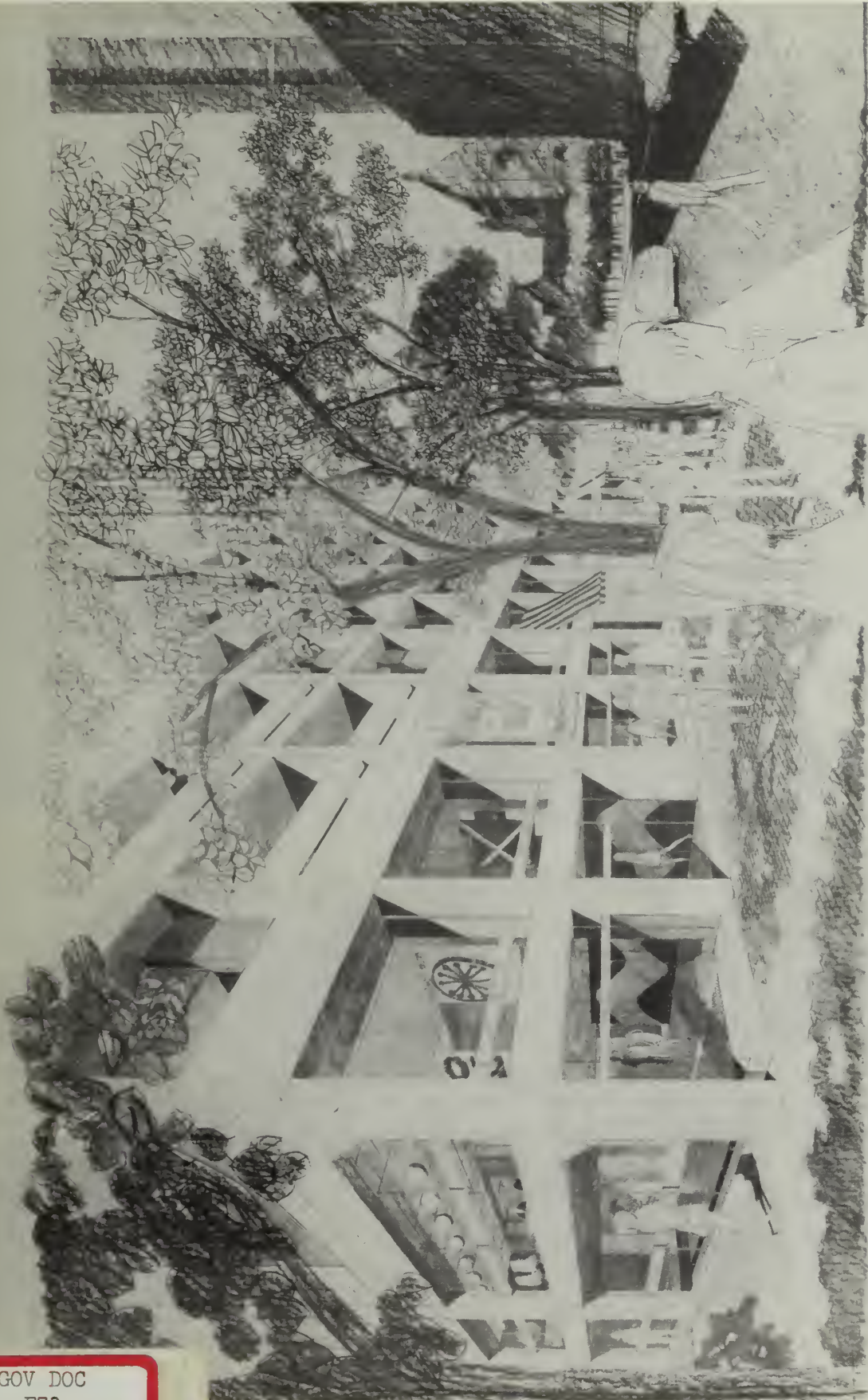


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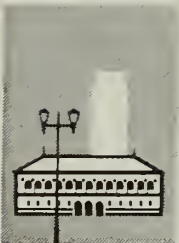
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Back Bay Federation for Community Development

SPIRIT OF '75

The last half of 1974 brought unwelcome trends: the decline of the national economy and the mounting of social tensions in the City.

These trends may persist, but there is good news ahead for Back Bay. The Bicentennial opens in April, 1975 and this will bring a record-breaking number of visitors and shoppers to Back Bay.

In the months ahead the first modern transit cars will roll through the Back Bay subway. . . the spectacular Hancock Tower will open for occupancy, so will the major Sheraton-Boston Addition. . . the Park Plaza and Fenway Renewal Projects should be ready to move ahead.

The cultural life of Back Bay will expand in May when the handsome Christian Science Center and the new home for the Institute of Contemporary Art are both completed.

Families are returning to the Back Bay as schools and colleges leave. The residential market is very strong as this historic turnabout takes place.

1975 may bring new problems, but also new opportunities. We can best meet these challenges by working together through our unique civic alliance: the Back Bay Federation and the group that Newsweek Magazine (December 2, 1974) called "the prestigious Back Bay Association".

Note: This report covers the last fiscal year of BBA ending January 31, 1975.

BACK BAY



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	II	BOYLSTON-NEWBURY STREETS
	III	RESIDENTIAL BACK BAY
	IV	MAJOR DEVELOPMENT AREAS
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On April 16 Archibald MacLeish will present his Bicentennial poem at the Boston Public Library, Copley Square. . . on the 18th the Museum of Fine Arts opens its Paul Revere Exhibit . . . on the 19th there will be bands in Copley Square and a parade down Boylston Street. . . on the 19th and 20th the New England Conservatory will present special concerts.

This is the way the Bicentennial will begin in the Back Bay and it will last all the way through December, 1976--twenty months of exhibitions, concerts and special events of all types.

Boston's two principal Bicentennial expositions will be here in the Back Bay:

"Where's Boston?", the exciting 20th Century Exposition now under construction at Prudential Center to open in late May.

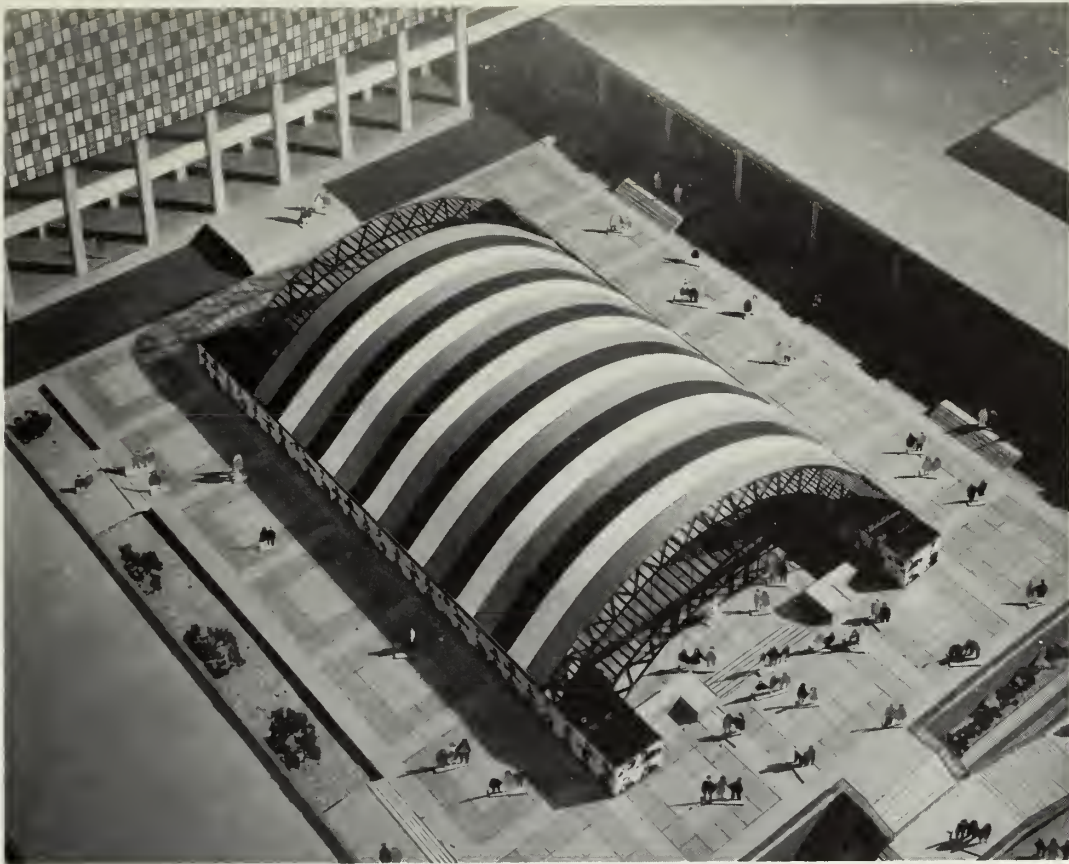
"The Grand Exposition of Progress and Invention", the 19th Century Exhibit sponsored by Gillette to open in June in the First Corps of Cadets Armory, Park Square.

There will be many other exhibits: "Literary Boston" at the BPL opening in April, "Religious Boston" at Prudential Center, along with exhibits at ICA and elsewhere throughout Back Bay.

In connection with the Bicentennial there will be many major improvements made in the area including restoration of the Public Garden and redesign of the Back Bay Railroad Station. BBA has strongly backed the Railroad Station proposal which was discussed at two BBA public meetings when presentations were given by architect Gil Fishman.

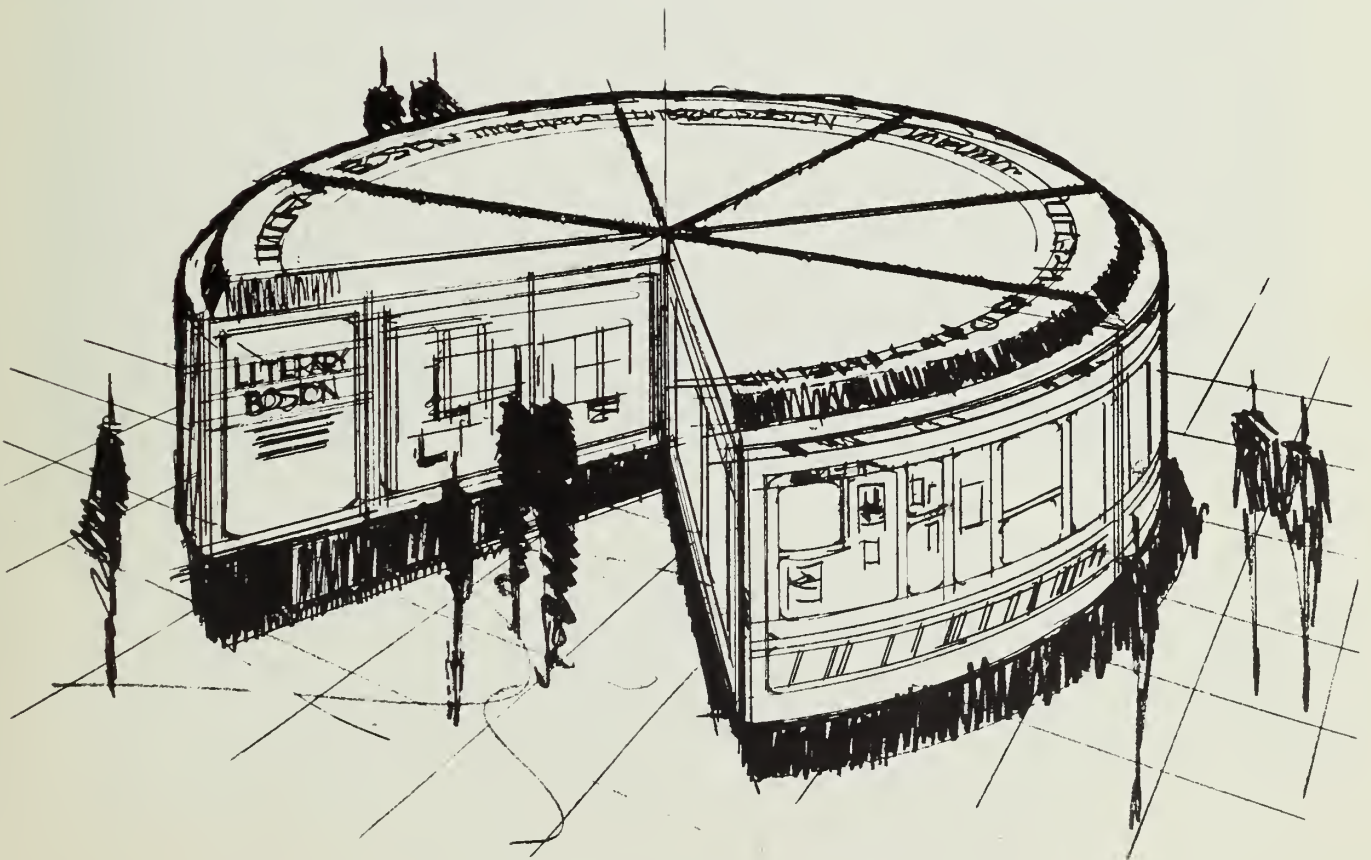
Copley Square should be a center of activity. Boston 200 plans weekly children's festivals and there may be crafts shows as well. Concerts and folk dancing should go on and there is the possibility of a first-class outdoor cafe in or near the Square.

New England Life is sponsoring the Bicentennial Forums, one of the most ambitious Bicentennial projects in which individuals of national prominence will come to Boston to re-examine the historical principals influencing America since Revolutionary times.



ABOVE: "Where's Boston"

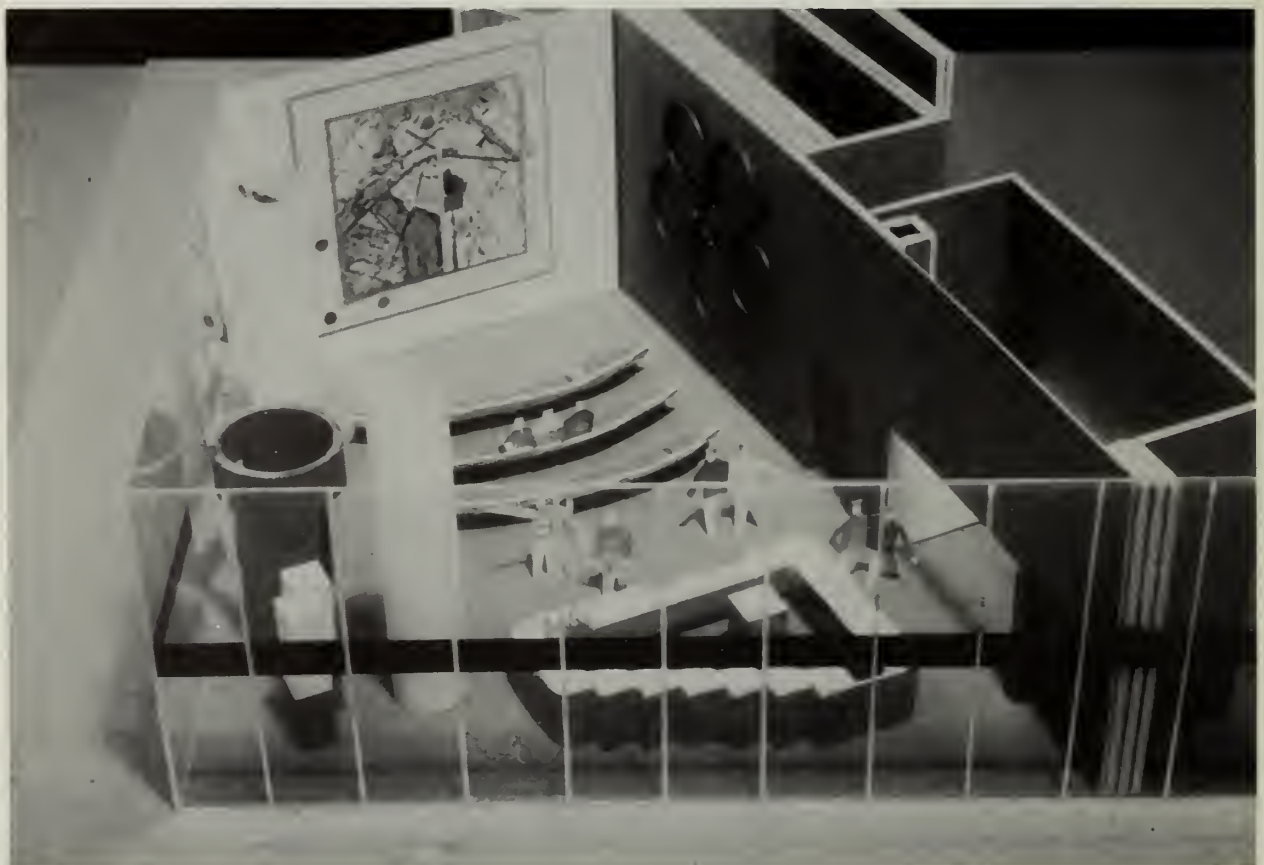
BELOW: "Literary Boston"



A high point of the Bicentennial in the Back Bay in 1975 will be the week of July 6 when the U.S. Conference of Mayors holds their annual convention at the Sheraton-Boston. On July 8 of that week, John V. Lindsay will come to New England Life Hall to discuss "Cities in America's Third Century".

Liberty Mutual has financed the research, production and installation expenses for the markers that will be posted along the Walking Trails in the Back Bay and throughout the City.

The best views of Boston during the Bicentennial years will be from the Prudential and Hancock Towers. Hancock's Observatory is discussed in Section IV of this report.



This is the principal Visitors' Information Center for the area to be located in the lobby of the John Hancock Tower. It will include illuminated three-dimensional maps of Boston and other imaginative features. Additional informational centers and services will be located at Prudential, the Railroad Station, in hotels and elsewhere in Back Bay.

In 1974 recession, inflation, and tougher suburban competition all combined to create new difficulties for the Boylston-Newbury Streets' commercial spine of Back Bay. One result was an unfortunate jump in the number of retail vacancies.

Nevertheless, the Back Bay retail complex showed exceptional resiliency. As old friends moved out, new ones appeared. Settebello replaced Worth's. . . Magic Pan replaced Traynor's . . . and Whimsey's will soon replace Mamma Leone's.

In so many cases the quality of the replacements was quite high. The long term outlook for Back Bay retailing remains very good. At the same time housing improvements along the retail streets have begun and this is an excellent sign for the future.

In 1975 many constructive new developments will be breaking. The Bicentennial is only one of these. Advancement in housing, employment and tourism, coupled with service and zoning improvements, are all part of the picture.

New Businesses

Here is a representative list of retail and service businesses that arrived in 1974 or who were committed to an early 1975 opening:

Aladire, Ltd.
Pillowed Interiors
Cafe Berkeley
Bedlam Brass Beds
Safar Boutique
Safar Coiffures
Flamingo
Pan Tree
Mandarin Yen
Chez Gourmet
Kennedy Studios
Summer Trading Co.
Brown Stone
Harvard Book Store

Elizabeth Grady Face First Salon
Campbell-Moreau Associates
Bucci
Gazebo
Cafe Topo
Plant Workshop
Whimsey's
Martini-Carl on Newbury
Hakikat Boutique
The English Gallery
Pronuptia De Paris
Stuart's Place
Gazelle
Walden Card Shop

On the horizon are many interesting prospects. The Women's Educational and Industrial Union has a very sophisticated boutique-restaurant plan coming up for 356 Boylston Street. The Press Club of Boston may soon come to Copley Square. The BBA New Business Committee anticipates another strenuous campaign in 1975. Attracting new business to this area is the Back Bay Association's number one goal.



Promotional

Many of the Galleries, assisted by BBA, formed into a group called the "Newbury Art Galleries" (NAG) and embarked upon a program of promotional activities which included maps of galleries, special exhibits and other events.

In 1975 the Bicentennial, of course, will be the focus of intensive promotional activities in and for the Back Bay.

New Developments

There are five special projects now moving ahead which will strengthen the Boylston-Newbury Streets' economy:

Exeter Towers is a plan for housing and a retail complex at Boylston-Exeter Streets opposite the Public Library extension. The Hugh Stubbins' plan for this site (see front cover) is moving ahead. An MHFA mortgage commitment has already been issued and a construction start in 1975 seems assured.

The Kanavos Building at 545 Boylston Street opened and the initial tenants, including the Office of the Government of Ontario, have arrived. Actually, the rental start is slow, but the pace should quicken in 1975.

The Vendome restoration continues. The retail mall plan is shown on page 12.

Conversion of the Exeter Theater into an unusual and exciting entertainment center progresses. BBA's February, 1975 has the details.

Restoration of an abandoned police station into the Institute of Contemporary Art should be completed in May.

Services

In late 1974 the City completed the Boylston Street lighting system, adding the last link from Clarendon to Arlington. This was carried out under the BBA "Promenade Plan" for Boylston Street which had been developed by several public agencies and BBA in the mid 60's. Boylston Street is now probably the best lit street in Boston.

A new lighting installation will be made soon on Arlington Street, using the same lamps as designed for Commonwealth Avenue and indicated below in Section III. Discussions have already begun about a new and improved lighting system for Newbury Street.



Sojourn, one of the fine new shops to open on Newbury Street within the past two years.

On March 20, 1974 Commissioner Casazza came to a BBA Meeting to launch a "Clean Streets Campaign" for Back Bay. Since then, street cleaning on Boylston and Newbury Streets has become remarkably effective. New rubbish containers are being tested on Boylston Street. During the Bicentennial period reinforcements will be available to clean up the Back Bay.

Security is a problem in Boston and every large city. This year the Back Bay was fortunate with the appointment of Deputy Superintendent Walter Rachalski in charge of this area. He has arranged for close collaboration between the police and BBA. Frequent meetings are part of the system. Definite improvements have been made in dealing with some very difficult problems.

Zoning

In 1973 BBA initiated a substantial rezoning of the area which, among other things, is intended to protect us from the onslaught of pornography. In 1974 BBA was a prime supporter of the Boston Redevelopment Authority zoning amendment to designate the Combat Zone as the Adult Entertainment District of Boston.

The virtue of this amendment, which was enacted, is simply this: it provides for the Combat Zone to remain where it is and it protects other parts of the City, including the Back Bay, from "Adult Entertainment". This gives the Back Bay another layer of protection.

We still have one porno palace on Boylston Street which is a nonconfirming use. Fortunately, this establishment has been sharply restricted by police action and may fade away in the near future.

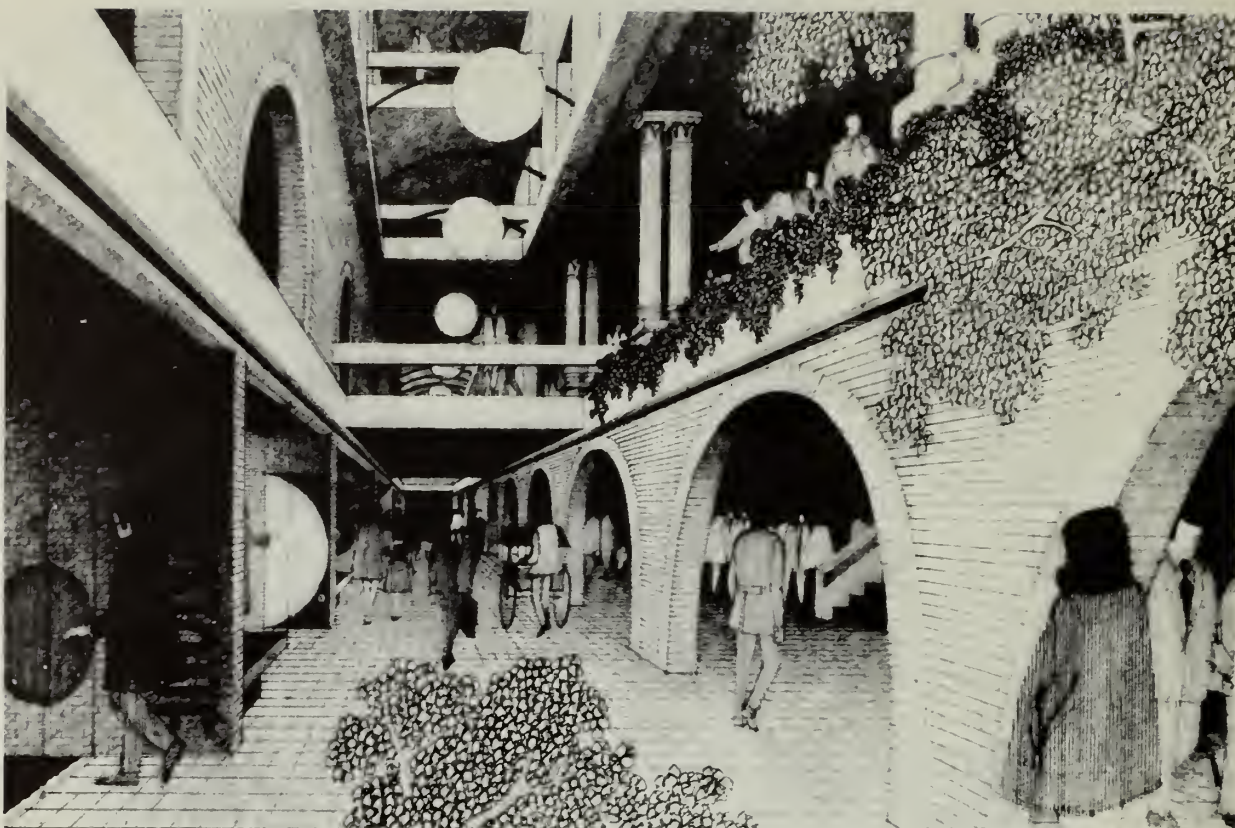
Transportation

MBTA has designed and ordered 175 modern light rail transit cars for the Green Line which serves Back Bay. The first of these should arrive for testing in mid 1975 and the service will become operational in 1976.

Parking in the Back Bay business areas is generally well balanced and the City of Boston is contemplating a major up-grading of the Saint James Avenue Garage.



At the BBA Annual Meeting, Mabel Hamilton speaks while (L. to R.) Roger Saunders, Kathy Kane and Daniel Ahern listen.



Sign Control and Architectural Control

The long term campaign for sign control is beginning to pay off. City enforcement has commenced and definite improvements are now visible. On top of this, the Architectural Control District has been expanded to include both Newbury and Boylston Streets from Dartmouth to Massachusetts Avenue. This occurred in August, 1974 as a result of legislation initiated by City Councillor DiCara, BBA, and Representative Barney Frank.

The combined sign and architectural control system should go far to restore and preserve the beauty of Newbury Street and within a few years it should make a dent in the visual debris of upper Boylston Street as well. There are already visible several examples of what architectural control is all about. The next time you are strolling up Newbury Street look at Pronuptia, Wilk & Welch, the Artisans, the English Gallery--all of which have signs or awnings approved by the Commission. The Architectural Commission has also approved the plans for restoration of the Exeter Theater and the Commission will review the plans for Exeter Towers when they become available in detail.

Between 1950 and 1965 schools and colleges expanded rapidly in Back Bay, especially in Residential Back Bay, the area north of Newbury Street.

As a result residents were displaced on a large scale, the social quality of the area suffered, and even the Back Bay retail complex was injured.

In the mid 1960's the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB), the Federation and BBA initiated a massive rezoning program which halted the further expansion of schools. Since the late 1960's the school population has been dropping slowly and the residential population has been going up again.

Now, the school outmigration has picked up steam. A recent report by the Federation shows that thirteen school buildings have already been converted to other uses and five are currently in the conversion process with an additional twenty-eight buildings on the market. The report predicts that many more school buildings will soon be on the market.

The rapid outmigration of schools has both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, it makes buildings available for residential conversion at a time when the residential market is very strong. In the case of those buildings located south of Commonwealth Avenue there are commercial and mixed use possibilities as well as residential.

The largest current problem as school properties flow onto the market is the unhappy accident of timing in relation to the national economy. Even though the apartment market is strong, the problem of financing conversion is most severe at this time. As a result, the alarming possibilities of empty buildings or buildings downgraded in use cannot be overlooked.

A really vigorous community effort to promote sound conversion is essential, and so the Federation is now organizing a program to stimulate marketing and conversion for constructive purposes. Several public agencies and developers are cooperating.

At the same time, the Federation and NABB are carefully reviewing the situation to insure strict protection of the neighborhood through the zoning process.

Condominiums Versus Rental Markets

The 1973-1974 Annual Report of the Federation and BBA stated:

"Today there are about 400 condominium units in the Back Bay and we confidently predict a 75% increase--up to 700 units--in 1974!"

A recent survey by the Federation showed that there are more than 700 condominiums now in the district, a substantial accomplishment for Residential Back Bay. Most of Boston's condominiums are in this area.

Economic conditions in recent months have slowed down condominium conversions and caused a shift strengthening the rental apartment market.

Vendome

The principal restoration project now under way is the Vendome with more than 100 residential condominiums plus shops and restaurants. At the end of 1974 nearly half of the condominiums had been sold and occupancy had commenced.

Parks and Lighting

The Dartmouth Street Mall, a pleasant promenade from Copley Square to Beacon Street, has been partially constructed and will be completed in 1975. Regular maintenance of the Commonwealth Avenue Mall is preserving the elm trees and producing other benefits.

The most visible current improvement is the installation of handsome octagonal lighting fixtures, based on a 19th Century design for Commonwealth Avenue, recommended by the Federation several years ago, and after further adaptations by Architect Joe Eldredge, now being installed on Commonwealth Avenue.

The City's Capital Improvement Budget includes (hopefully) \$1,604,000 for the restoration of the Public Garden, the magnificent front yard of the Back Bay.

IV

MAJOR DEVELOPMENT AREAS

South of Boylston Street from Massachusetts Avenue to Charles Street is a vast area of economic growth, including five major development programs under construction or in planning. Collectively, they represent more than a hundred acres of new development and hundreds of millions of dollars in investment.

Christian Science Church Center

May, 1975 will see the completion of the Church Center which includes The Mother Church itself and three new structures: the Administration, Sunday School and Colonnade buildings. It is this magnificent development which Architectural Forum described as "urban renewal in a timeless sense--that which improves human and community attitudes about what is possible".



The Church Center and Prudential, taken together, provide an extraordinary pedestrian precinct of nearly 50 acres including pools, fountains, landscaping and open spaces together with religious, cultural and commercial facilities of international importance. . . along with entertainment and retailing. . . and with a major housing community included.

The exceptional social range of the combined area was illustrated one April evening in 1974 when church services were being held at one end of the complex, pedestrians were strolling by the great pool. . . the Metropolitan Opera Company was performing Don Giovanni. . . the restaurants and retailing were in full swing. . . and the Real Estate Board was holding its annual meeting with the Mayor and Governor in attendance -- all in the same pedestrian precinct just south of Boylston Street.

Prudential Center

Although this project was the first really big step in the development of Boston as a contemporary city, nevertheless, construction continues here.

In 1975 the Addition to the Sheaton-Boston will be completed, making that New England's largest hotel with 1430 rooms. Nearby the Bicentennial Exposition (photo page 5) is being built.

John Hancock Complex

The replacement of glass in the Tower should be completed by July. The building should be occupied during the latter part of 1975.

Visitors to the Tower will find many special features including the topographical map of Revolutionary Boston as it was in 1775 (opposite page).

In the Garage the space vacated by Mamma Leone's will soon contain a new restaurant, Whimsey's, a creation of Alan Tremain who has performed such a noteworthy task in restoring elegance and vitality to Hancock's Copley Plaza Hotel.

Back Bay - South Cove

South of Stuart Street is an area marked by decline and obsolescence. The Federation is studying this area with a view toward generating redevelopment opportunities.

Last year's annual report said: "There is a chance that the City's exciting 19th Century Exhibit for the Bicentennial will be located in this area".



Since that date Boston 200, supported by the Federation, has arranged for the 19th Century building to be housed in the First Corps of Cadets Armory in Park Square. Gillette is the sponsor.

Park Square

In March, 1974 the mammoth Park Plaza Urban Renewal Project was revived when the Department of Community Affairs gave its conditional approval. One condition is the requirement that BRA prepare an Environmental Impact Report for approval by State agencies.

The environmental study is now under way and it is being monitored by the Civic Advisory Committee in which the Federation and BBA are active members.

Conscious of the long delays in the project planning process, the Federation has made proposals to expedite the renewal of the area and these are now under general review.

Fenway

After many long delays, it now appears that one or more major housing projects will go into construction in 1975. The leading prospects are the Twin Towers at Huntington and Massachusetts avenues opposite Symphony and Horticultural Halls. Another strong possibility is the residential structure planned for the site just west of the Colonnade Hotel.

These three developments will have an aggregate of about 700 units of MHFA mixed-income housing plus shops.

Rehabilitation continues in the Fenway and includes the current renovation of 136 units at Norway Street by Continental Wingate Company. The Huntington Avenue Improvement Program should be launched in 1975.

A major force in guiding future Fenway development is the elected Fenway Project Area Committee (FENPAC) which was created in 1973 and funded in 1974.

Kenmore Square

Late in 1972 the Federation urged BRA to begin a planning program for this district. The result was the BRA "Renaissance Study" of September, 1973. This provides an informational basis for further work and BRA has now revived its planning program for the district.

The Federation, working with BRA and other groups, is especially interested in the large-scale, short-run possibilities for housing improvement in and around Kenmore Square. Both the needs and the opportunities are striking. Also under study are a number of pedestrian scale improvements.

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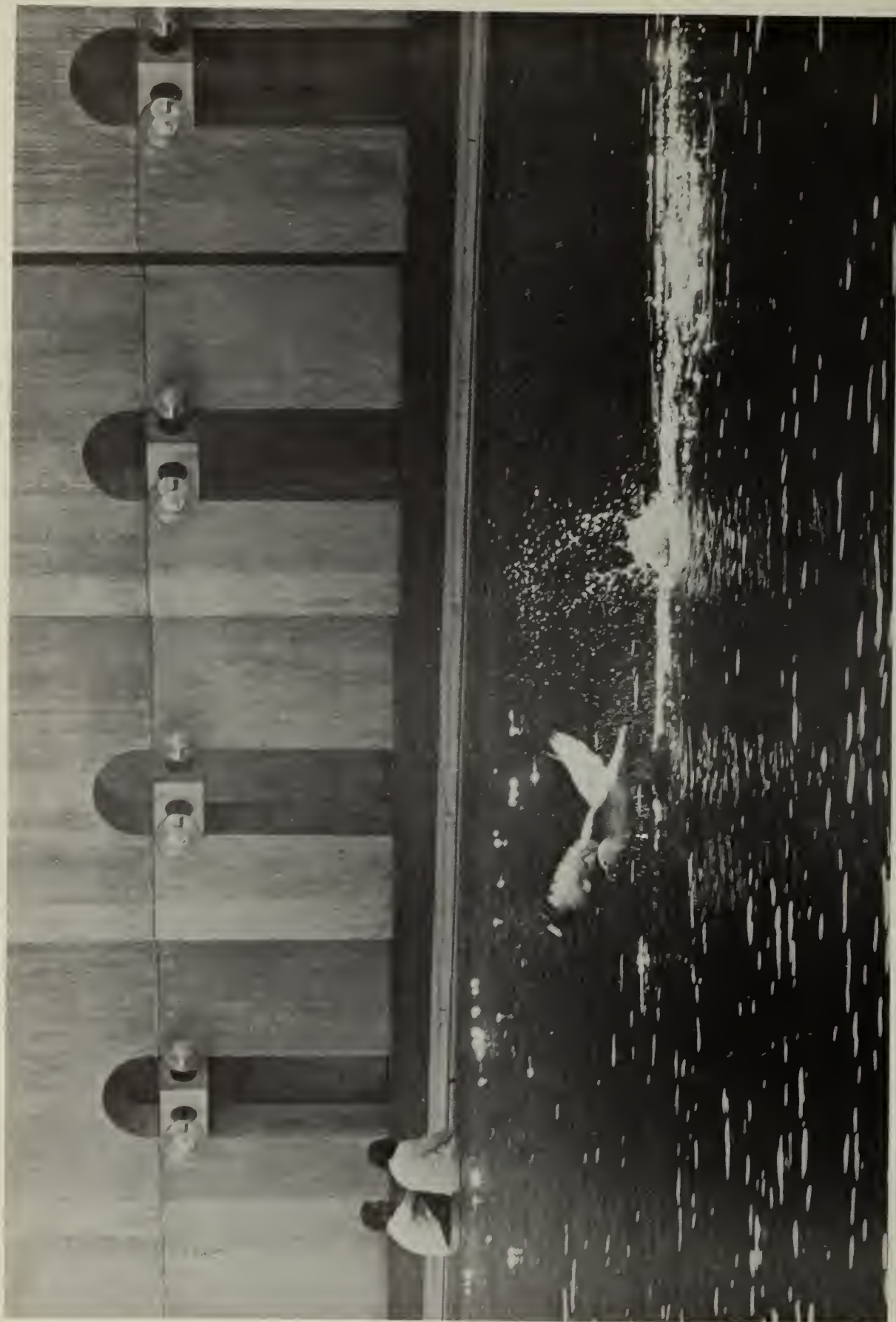


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